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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the IRIS (IDEA and Research for Inclusive Settings) Center, which is designed to create and implement a comprehensive national resource for faculty teaching preservice courses in general education, school administration, school counseling, and school nursing. Its intention is to develop new graduates who can meet the needs of students with special needs in general education classrooms. Currently, the IRIS Project (IDEA '97 and Research for Inclusive Settings) is developing supports for higher education faculty to enhance their teacher training efforts, specifically in the areas of early reading interventions, behavior management, and linguistic diversity. The IRIS interactive learning modules present participants with: a challenge (what students should know and be able to do at the end of the module); an initial thoughts activity (which provides an opportunity for students to examine their current knowledge base of the challenge); perspectives by experts on the challenge; assessment (the opportunity for students to apply what they know and evaluate what they need to study more); and a wrap-up. (Contains 39 references.) (SM)

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Effective Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms: The IRIS Center for Faculty Enhancement

ED 473 260

Greater numbers of children with disabilities are being educated in the general classroom setting, yet many general educators have received little or no training on effective instructional methods or accommodations to use with these students. The 1997 IDEA Amendments (PL 105-17) include new opportunities for school success among students with disabilities, including greater access to the general education curriculum so that they may achieve higher performance standards; their inclusion in large-scale performance assessments; and closer interaction among disciplines to achieve these purposes (OSEP, 1997). In addition, findings expressed in the Amendments (Part A, Section 601[c]) point out that education of students with disabilities can be made more effective by: high-quality training of personnel; whole-school approaches and pre-referral interventions to address learning needs without labeling students; and coordinating school improvement efforts so that special education becomes a service for children, rather than a place where they are sent. The purpose of **The IRIS (IDEA and Research for Inclusive Settings) Center** is to create and implement a comprehensive national resource for faculty teaching preservice courses in general education, school administration, school counseling, and school nurs g, resulting in new graduates who can meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Literature Review

"Individuals pursue activities and situations in which they feel competent and avoid those in which they do not" (Brownell & Pajares, 1999, p. 154, citing Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 1992). Personnel who have a low sense of efficacy, lack experience with students with disabilities, and/or lack practical use of differentiated teaching practices and interdisciplinary collaboration have lower receptivity and elevated hostility toward inclusive education (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998). It follows that preservice curricula, textbooks, and experiences should result in confidence among teachers, administrators, counselors, and school nurses that they can be effective with students who have disabilities, that they can collaborate in a systems approach to inclusion, and that school leadership and professional development can continue to enhance their efficacy.

Teacher preparation continues to be the focus of reform efforts. The Holmes Group (1995) identified 7 goals for colleges of education for the future, and other initiatives for change have been advanced (e.g., Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995; Paul, Rosselli, & Evans, 1995; Wideen & Grimmett, 1995). Additional critiques have centered on preparation for inclusive education. For example, a major position paper issued by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 1998) concerns general educator preparation for learning disabilities. An Applachia Education Laboratory report has delineated concerns about general educators' preparedness for inclusive education (Trump & Hange, 1996): few participants felt they had adequate preservice or inservice training to be effective in an inclusive setting, and virtually all said that training on needs of students with special needs and on modifying curriculum and instruction "would help teachers to alleviate their own concerns and those of administrators and parents. A substantial effort in this area would, in the opinion of group members, eliminate or reduce many of the other

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obstacles" (p. 18). A study of 775 general educators' perceptions of their knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995) showed that "many teachers were not prepared to plan and make adaptations for students with disabilities. Many acknowledged that their teacher preparation programs did not include intensive instruction on how to teach students with disabilities" (p. 172). These findings have been verified in research syntheses (e.g., Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers is promoting standards-based reform through model standards and assessments for beginning teachers. "Model core standards for licensing teachers represent those principles which should be present in all teaching, regardless of the subject or grade level taught, and serve as a framework for the systemic reform of teacher preparation and professional development" (INTASC, 2000, p. 2). This effort includes examination of the competencies that all beginning teachers should have for working with students with disabilities (Poliokas, 2000).

As a result of this large gap in the knowledge base of many educators' the IRIS Project (IDEA '97 and Research for Inclusive Settings) is currently developing supports for higher education faculty to support their teacher training efforts, specifically in the areas of early reading interventions, behavior management, and linguistic diversity.

Early Reading Interventions

In the past five years, the national spotlight on education has focused more specifically upon reading than ever before. For instance, President George W. Bush has launched his "No Child Left Behind" initiative to ensure that the nation's children are provided with the best possible reading instruction, and a number of states have implemented statewide reading initiatives that focus upon reading instruction in grades K-3. The emphasis appears well founded as statistics indicate that as many as one in three children have difficulty learning to read (Adams, 1990; Lyon & Moats, 1997).

Project I Can Read (ICARE) addresses critical areas of national need for struggling readers at the K – 3 level including (a) reading achievement, (b) effective reading instruction, (c) multi-level intervention and access to the general education curriculum, (d) professional development, and (e) home literacy. Converging evidence has identified critical components of effective early reading instruction (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) including (a) listening comprehension; (b) phonological awareness; (c) word analysis, which includes the alphabetic principle and spelling; (d) fluency; (e) vocabulary; and (f) comprehension. There is also a body of knowledge that delineates the critical features of effective instruction. Eight primary features of effective instruction are highlighted: explicit instruction, strategies, scaffolding, grouping size, relevant practice, sequence of instructional objectives, relevant materials, and continually assessing student progress (Kameenui, Carnine, & Dixon, 1998; Rosenshine, 1997).

There is a critical need for reading programs that enable school districts to accurately identify the reading levels and needs of students with learning disabilities early and maximize access to the general education curriculum. Vaughn, Moody, and Schumm (1998) describe the instructional activities and grouping practices used by 14 resource room teachers with students with learning disabilities: (a) teachers primarily used whole group instruction with 5 to 19 students in a group, (b) little differentiated instruction or materials were provided despite a wide range of student reading abilities, and (c) few

activities addressing word recognition or reading comprehension were observed. These studies suggest that students with learning disabilities may not be receiving optimal instruction or sufficient opportunities to engage in reading. A goal of Project ICARE is to create an instructional environment for early readers, including students with learning disabilities that will address these deficiencies. Teachers need to be trained to include effective reading instruction in their beginning reading programs. Findings also indicated that teachers averaged 16 minutes per day providing reading instruction. Thus, professional development in early reading instruction and features of instruction is a critical area of ICARE. Finally, recent research suggests that literacy environments differ widely across families, contributing to wide variation in the literacy-related knowledge and skill children bring to school, and thus their later success as readers and writers. Thus, family literacy becomes an ideal strategy to help parents contribute to the K-3 goals for reading. The purpose of ICARE is to create a model demonstration project for early readers including students with learning disabilities that will address these issues.

Behavior Management

The lack of school discipline or, more specifically, the management of problem behaviors continues to be identified by educators and the general public as the most persistent and quite possibly the most troubling issue facing schools (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Rose, & Gallup, 2000; White, Algozzine, Audette, Marr, & Ellis, 2001). Teachers report that they are losing control of their instructional environments, and school district data indicate that they are resorting to administrative involvement and disciplinary removals at excessive rates (Rosenberg, 1996). As observed by Walker et al. (1996), educators have a long history of applying simple, expedient, and general solutions to complex student behavior patterns and, unfortunately, there is a corresponding long history of disappointment when these attempts do not work as expected. Spurred on, in part, by the increase in frequency and intensity of school behavior problems, recent efforts (Colvin et al., 1993; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Colvin, 1996; Osher & Hanley, 1996; Rosenberg & Jackman, 1997; Walker et al., 1995) strongly suggest that no single intervention or item from a "bag of tricks" can sufficiently address the complexity of school-wide behavior problems.

It is generally regarded that solutions start with viewing each school as a comprehensive system in which educators, parents, and related service personnel develop tangible structures and supports to prevent, respond to, and ultimately resolve problem behaviors. Educators must collaborate with teams of fellow professionals and parent/family representatives to design and implement their own comprehensive and systematic plan for addressing the behavioral needs of all students in a proactive and positive fashion, including those with identified disabilities. Schools and their individual classrooms must have clear behavioral expectations and procedures for all students; only then can we have truly inclusive comprehensive behavior systems that address the needs of all students.

For over a decade, faculty at Johns Hopkins University's Department of Special Education have been assisting LEA-based programs serving students with troubling behaviors in the development of comprehensive proactive behavior management programs. Originally coined by Curwin and Mendler (1988), the term PAR refers to preventing, acting upon, and resolving troubling behavior. In our activities, PAR is a

term used to describe a process-based model in which collaborative teams of teachers, school administrators, parents, and related service personnel work together within a prescriptive workshop format to come to consensus on an individualized school-wide, comprehensive approach to discipline. Specifically, plans and strategies to *prevent* the occurrence of troubling behavior, *act*, or respond to, instances of rule compliance and noncompliance in a consistent fashion, and *resolve* many of the issues that underlie or cause troubling behavior are developed, implemented, and evaluated. Through the integrated introduction and application of validated best practices such as strategy instruction (e.g., Deshler, Ellis, & Lenz, 1997), universal school-wide management (Nelson & Colvin, 1995; Rosenberg & Jackman, 1997; Walker et al., 1996), and positive behavioral supports (Lewis & Sugai, 1999), building-based teams design their own plan of action based upon research-based procedures that have been documented to work. Specifically, each school-based team creates a structured, jargon-free management plan that is readily understood by students, parents, and all involved in the educational process.

Linguistic Diversity

Working with linguistically diverse students can be challenging, particularly for a teacher who does not speak the child's primary language. Detecting the difference between a language impairment or a learning disability and a language difference can be difficult, even for well-trained professionals (Smith, 2001). Sometimes, children are identified who do not have a language impairment or learning disability, only a language difference. And, other times, children's disabilities are masked by the language difference and they wait years for special services. Diverse children with genuine learning disabilities may not score well on a standardized test of intelligence, so they do not show the necessary discrepancy between potential and achievement to qualify for services. On the other hand, some children may be wrongly identified as having a learning disability when, in fact, it is their difficulty with English—their underachievement in a second language—that causes their poor academic achievement (McLean, 1999; Ruiz, 1995). Educators must become proficient distinguishing between a language difference and language disorder, as well as working with linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

Contributions

The work of the IRIS project advances the knowledge base of educators dealing with the complexity of diversity, specifically, the diversity of an assortment of learning needs. The focus of this work is to provide higher education faculty with critical information on research-based practices for students with disabilities. As faculty then incorporate this information into their coursework, the efficacy of future teachers, and subsequently the education of many children with disabilities, will be greatly improved.

Curriculum Content and Resources

Cognitive research has shown that an effective instructional method is to anchor specific domain content around challenges that exemplify the utility of that content. The combination of a challenge and activities designed to help students meet the learning objectives of that challenge is called a ***module***. Each module is based upon the *Star*

Legacy Module— developed by Dr. John Bransford and his colleagues at the Learning Technology Center, Peabody College, at Vanderbilt University—that contains five discreet tasks. As Schwartz, Lin, Brophy and Bransford (1999) emphasize, "the components for the learning cycle were chosen because they have repeatedly appeared in educational research as important, yet often implicit, components of learning."

These highly interactive modules first present each participant with a Challenge (task 1), usually in the form of a frequently encountered school scenario. After posting their Initial Thoughts online (task 2), participants then gain additional information through Perspectives and Resources (task 3) to help solve the Challenge. Next, in the Assessment section (task 4), participants are encouraged to apply this information and evaluate their decisions before receiving final commentary or assessment in the Wrap It Up section (task 5).

The ***Challenge*** demonstrates what students should know and be able to do at the end of the module. It helps answer students' question, "Why do I need to know this?" by introducing the module with a problem scenario, case, news event, or common misconception presenting the targeted content in a realistic context. Based on prioritized learning objectives for the lesson, the challenge is designed to show connections between ideas. Research has shown that learning that occurs within a meaningful context is more likely to be used for subsequent problem solving.

The ***Initial Thoughts*** activity presents students with an opportunity to examine their current knowledge base of the challenge, including their naive perceptions of the domain, (Brophy, S.P., 2000). This can help students make their own thinking visible. By asking them to brainstorm ideas first, the students become more appreciative of the disparity between their preliminary observation and their later understanding of the challenge. "Often times, it is this self-comparison that makes students realize how much they have learned" (Schwartz, et al., 1999).

Perspectives are statements by "experts" describing their view of the challenge. The experts' provide insightful commentary into diverse dimensions of the challenge--vocabulary and perspectives that are often different from that of the students--but do not offer an unequivocal resolution to the challenge. At this point, students can evaluate their initial thoughts in comparison with the insight and knowledge of the experts (Brophy, 2000). ***Resources*** can include simulations, homework problems, lectures, reading materials, links to websites, or other materials that will help students meet the learning objectives.

The ***Assessment*** section provides students with the opportunity to apply what they know and evaluate what they need to study more. Assessment activities can be homework questions, online quizzes, or a discussion or essay that synthesizes ideas they have analyzed in the Resources section (Brophy, 2000). Ideally, feedback from the assessment section "should suggest how to achieve the needed learning, and should motivate students to revise and improve their work"

(Schwartz, et al., 1999). Students should feel free to move between the Perspectives & Resources and Assessment sections until they are confident with what they've learned.

The ***Wrap It Up*** section is the conclusion of the Legacy module. It may offer a presentation by an expert summarizing the content or a well-crafted multimedia conclusion to the initial challenge. Or it could be a final assessment of what students know in the form of a quiz, an essay, or a homework assignment (Brophy, 2000).

Modules

The IRIS Early Reading Module: Learning to Read features an engaging challenge and three strategies that address the challenge of teaching a class of young children with diverse abilities to read. The strategies are:

KPALS (Kindergarten Peer Assisted Learning Strategies): a peer-tutoring program for kindergarten and first grade developed by Lynn and Doug Fuchs of Vanderbilt University. The strategy overview features digital video clips of KPALS instruction and children at work in KPALS classrooms. The resource section contains audio clips of Lynn and Doug Fuchs explaining KPALS and its uniqueness and effectiveness as well as a description of KPALS, links to websites and an annotated list of research papers on KPALS. An additional resource page contains detailed information on how KPALS procedures are carried out in classrooms.

ICARE (I CAn REad): developed by Diane Pedrotty Bryant, Sylvia Linan-Thompson, and others at the University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts. This strategy overview demonstrates a method of first grouping children based on their instructional needs and then adapting instruction and providing individualized lessons as necessary. In the resource section, Dr. Bryant describes how small group instruction can be used to target specific skills identified as essential for reading success. This section also includes an in-depth focus on word study instruction and step-by-step procedures on how to implement it.

Pre-referral strategies: includes information on effective assessment and creating portfolios and other documentation for the referral process, created by Peabody College's Don Compton. The resource section defines the goals, benefits and stages of pre-referral strategies and features links to pages that outline the typical reading performance of students in kindergarten and first grade.

The IRIS Discipline Module focuses on managing challenging behaviors through classroom discipline. This module, created by Mike Rosenberg and Lori Jackman of Johns Hopkins University, is centered around the PAR (preventing, acting upon, and resolving troubling behaviors) model, a comprehensive behavior management technique for classroom or school-wide settings. This module contains audio clips of Rosenberg and Jackman sharing personal classroom experiences, explaining rules and behavior management procedures and discussing the advantages of classroom discipline. In addition, this module also contains an interactive game for participants.

The IRIS Diversity Module demonstrates effective ways to work with exceptional students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The information has been gathered from materials produced by the BUENO Center for Multicultural Education, directed by

Dr. Leonard Baca. The module focuses on curricular considerations, teacher bias, and the role of general education teachers. The module examines the importance of each of these areas and how to implement successful practices in these areas.

Case Studies

The IRIS Case Study Units are being developed for use in a wide variety of courses to provide students with opportunities for authentic problem-solving. The Case Study Units provide instructors with course enhancement materials that do not require access to the internet. Case Study Units are divided into three levels, each level comprising two or more case studies. This three level format was developed to allow students to progress from:

Level A - information gathering to
Level B - analyzing the information, and eventually to
Level C - synthesizing the information.

The case study assignments require higher-level thinking at each subsequent level, with students receiving less support as they progress through the unit. Students should be exposed to all of the strategies or approaches at Level A. They will use the same strategies at Levels B & C, but the assignments at these levels should require students to analyze and synthesize the information about the strategies.

The IRIS Case Study Unit on Effective Room Management incorporates interesting scenarios and effective strategies as an exciting introduction to important concepts about room arrangement. Additional case study units on Establishing Classroom Norms and Expectations and Early Reading will soon be available.

Fact Sheets

The IRIS website features an array of fact sheets on disability topics. These fact sheets were created by 15 different clearinghouses and other disability organizations but can be accessed easily from the IRIS website. Soon fact sheets on IDEA and legal issues will be available as well.

Web Resource Directory

The *Web Resource Directory* is a searchable database of online resources available at the IRIS website. It allows faculty members to search by category to find information about websites on the special education or disability topic of their interest. The Directory contains annotations most useful for faculty and features only websites of exceedingly high quality. While some entries on the student version feature websites also included in the faculty version, the student directory contains unique website entries and annotations written solely for a student audience.

The Faculty Version of the Web Resource Directory is also available from the IRIS Center on CD-Rom. Although the CD version allows the user to search by single category only, the CD makes available the full body of online information to faculty who may have limited Internet access.

Online Dictionary

The IRIS website will also feature an Online Dictionary with hundreds of terms related to special education and inclusion. Featured for each term will be an informative definition, a list of related terms, and a list of related IRIS resources.

Conclusion

The purpose of The IRIS Center is to dramatically increase the likelihood that new general educators, school administrators, school nurses, and school counselors will be effective in improving results for students with disabilities *across the United States*. This will be accomplished by providing high quality course enhancement materials for faculty to use in college classrooms. The materials will feature well-researched strategies ad interventions and will include an array of formats such as interactive modules, case study units, fact sheets, a Web Resource Directory, and an online dictionary. These materials will be available at the IRIS website (http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu) or by contacting the IRIS Center (1-866-626-IRIS).*

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